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## HILPRECHT'S "NEW DELUGE TABLET"

*The Babylonian Expedition of the University of Pennsylvania.*  
Series D: Researches and Treatises, edited by H. V. HILPRECHT. Vol. V. Fasciculus I. *The Earliest Version of the Babylonian Deluge Story and The Temple Library of Nippur*, by H. V. HILPRECHT. "Eckley Brinton Coxe, Junior, Fund." Philadelphia, published by the UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA, 1910. pp. 65.

ANY work dealing with what is called "The Earliest Version of the Babylonian Deluge Story" is bound to attract the greatest interest on the part of the Assyriologists and all students of the Bible. The fascinating story of the decipherment of the cuneiform inscriptions and the great achievements of Rawlinson, Layard, and Oppert penetrated after all but a small circle, the student of Assyriology or the larger number of educated people to whom ancient history appealed. But it was the discovery of a fragment of the Deluge Tablet in the British Museum by George Smith in 1872 which brought out the interest of a vastly greater number of students and the public at large, and was directly responsible for further expeditions. In a sense the Assyrian or Babylonian Deluge Story has been symbolical in the minds of many of the relations between Babylonian investigations and biblical studies. This fact alone makes any new version of the story of importance; exactly because of the great popular interest, restraint is imposed upon sober scholars.

The fragment containing an early account of the Babylonian Deluge Story, published in the present volume, was excavated by the fourth Babylonian Expedition of the University of Pennsylvania, and Professor Hilprecht, its decipherer and interpreter, asserts that it was inscribed 600 years before the time generally assigned to Moses, and that in its preserved portion it shows a

much greater resemblance to the biblical Deluge Story than any other fragment discovered hitherto. The main proof for the age of the fragment rests on the place of its discovery. It was found, according to Hilprecht, intermingled with other partly dated tablets which were inscribed about 2100 B. C. and earlier. This conclusion is further confirmed, as Hilprecht maintains, by philological proofs, namely by the use of the sign PI for the syllable *wa* in *wa-ši-e* and the change of *s* to *z*, when preceded by the dental *t*, or by a sibilant.

In connection with the published fragment the volume contains a description and general survey of the character and contents of the Temple Library of Nippur. Of special interest in this survey is the fourth chapter, dealing with a new inscription and the time of an ancient King of Suti, Erridu-pizir.

Concerning the age of the fragment, palæographically it may belong to an old Babylonian period, probably to the date assigned to it by Hilprecht. But the assertion ought not to have been made with absolute certainty, since no claim is made in this volume that the author personally found the tablet in the lowest stratum or supervised the packing of the boxes. Leaving aside the place of discovery, it might have been inscribed two hundred years later, at the time of Ammi-zaduga, and thus be contemporary with Father Scheil's version, as the use of PI for *wa* and the treatment of the sibilants as in *binuzza* are indisputably found throughout the whole period of the Hammurabi dynasty. As for PI, it might even belong to a Cassite period; since Hilprecht admits that PI had at this time the reading of *wi*, there is no reason why it should not have been used for *wa* as well. As a matter of fact, however, the sign PI for *wa* is even found in Neo-Babylonian, as in *wa-ash-ru*, *wa-at-ru-tim* (thus are these words written in the Code of Hammurabi), in which PI stands of course for *wa*, not *a* or *'a*, no matter whether the *waw* sound was pronounced or not. In the opinion of the writer, however, it is quite irrelevant whether the tablet was inscribed two hundred years earlier or later. The scribe did not invent this story, even if it was written in the Cassite period, but most likely copied it from another tablet, as we know that the version published by Father

Scheil, dated at the time of Ammi-zaduga, was copied from another tablet.

As for the resemblance of this version to the biblical narrative, Hilprecht attaches great importance to the two following features: In this version it seems to be Ellil (Bēl), the highest god of Nippur, who both causes the Deluge and saves the Babylonian Noah from destruction, just as in the biblical version both actions are done by the Lord: and in this version occurs the expression *minu*, 'number,' in *ku-um mi-ni* 'instead of a number,' which is identical with Hebrew מִן in the biblical version (in P). Both arguments are very precarious. Supposing that the author of the biblical Deluge Story had actually taken it from the version of Ashurbanipal's Library, even then he must have represented the only existing God as the destroyer and the savior. How could he help doing otherwise without throwing overboard monotheism? The interpretation of *ku-um mi-ni* "instead of a number" = 'instead of many,' is rather peculiar. Admitting that Hebrew מִן is a Babylonian loan-word, how could a word "number" signify 'many'? On the contrary, we would expect *minu* to have the meaning of 'a few,' in opposition to *lā minu*, 'numberless,' corresponding to Hebrew מְעַט and Arabic *ma'dūd*. The writer, therefore, would propose, with all reserve, a different reading and interpretation of *ku-um mi-ni*. It is now well known that in a great many personal names of the time of the Hammurabi-dynasty, and in some of the Cassite period, MI without the determinative GISH, is an ideogram for *šillu*, 'shadow, protection,' as in the names *Šilli*(MI-NI)-*Shamash Tā-ab-šillum* (MI-LUM), etc., etc., (see Ranke, *Early Babylonian Personal Names*, 247, note 2). Accordingly, there is absolutely no reason to prevent us from reading here as well *ku-um šilli* (MI with phonetic complement NI = *li*), 'The place of shadow.' Admitting the reading, the question would now arise as to its meaning. Since the ship was made for the purpose of 'carrying what has been saved of life,' we should be rather inclined to assume that figuratively it was very befittingly called 'the place of protection.' In this case, however, all the persons and objects that had to be saved ought to have been enumerated before *ku-um šilli*, and it seems that *ki[n]-ta*, "the family," occurs afterwards. And there-

fore, it is more likely that a certain part of the ship, occupied by the animals, was called *ku-um šilli*. As a matter of fact, a part of a ship was called *šillu*, as II R. 62, No. 2, 70, where parts of a ship are enumerated, we find: GISH-GISH-MI-MA = *šil-lum elippi*, literally 'the shadow of the ship,' which could only mean 'the dark part, the ship's hold.' Then *ku-um šilli* would be an exact formation like *ān šilli* 'receptacle of shadow' = 'prison'—if not a synonym—and might well correspond to the תַּחְתִּימִים, 'the lowest cells of the ark' of the Biblical version which were most likely intended as a dwelling-place for the animals. (According to the Midrash, however, the upper cells were for the human beings, the middle for the animals, and the lowest for the dung). The asyndetic expressions before *ku-um šilli*, namely 'the beasts of the field, the birds of heaven,' point, of course, to a third class of enumerated beings or things. The writer, in accordance with the First Nineveh Version 79, would propose to supplement *ū zēr napshāte kalāma* 'and all kinds of living beings'—a general expression, including the creeping things on the ground and species which could not be classified under *bul* nor *umām širim* and had to be saved as well, as mice, rats, etc., and exactly correspond to the biblical expression וּמִכָּל־הָחַי וּמִכָּל־הָרֶמֶשׂ. Beside this, there are a few other points in Hilprecht's interpretation to which the writer takes exception: *a-pa-ash-shar* (l. 2) he translates 'I will loosen,' and supplements *uṣurāt*, respectively *kippāt shamē ū iršitim*, 'the confines of heaven and earth.' This is rather questionable, since it seems, according to the First Nineveh Version 103-104, that the Babylonian Deluge was not caused by a torrent, but by a cyclone which drove the waters of the sea over the dry land (s. Jensen, *Kosmologie*, 388). It would, therefore, be better to read and translate [*naḳbe apsi ū tamāte*] *a-pa-ash-shar* 'the fountains of the sea and oceans I will set free.' We may perhaps compare Job 38, 8-11: וַיֹּסֶךְ בְּרָלְתִּים יָם... וַאֲמַר עַד פֹּה תִבָּא וְלֹא תוֹסִיף.

In l. 5 the first sign seems to be *e*, and since, according to the First Nineveh Version 170-175, the Deluge was caused to destroy wicked mankind, we may perhaps read [*e-li ni-shi la ki*]-*e-ni*, 'over the faithless mankind.' In l. 11, if the first

sign is *lam*, we might supplement *bu* and read *bu-lam* 'tame animals,' in opposition to *umam širim*, 'wild animals.'

The following is a transliteration and translation of the fragment proposed by the writer, with the supplementes enclosed in brackets.

## TRANSLITERATION.

1. . . . . (?) -sha (?) -shi (?) -il (?) -i (?) . . .  
(?) -ka
2. [naḫ-be ap-si-i u ta-ma-a-ti] a-pa-ash-shar.
3. [a-bu-ba a-sha-ka-an-ma] ka-la ni-shi ish-te-nish i-za-bat
4. [u at-ta-ma she-'i na-pish]-ti la-am a-bu-bi wa-ši-e
5. [e-li ni-shi la ki]-e-ni ma-la i-ba-ash-shu lu-kin ub-bu-ku  
lu-pu-ut-tu ḫu-ru-shu
6. . . . . (iṣu) elippam ra-be-tam bi-ni ma
7. ga-be-e gab-bi lu bi-nu-uz- za
8. . . . shi-i lu (iṣu) ma-gurgurru ba-bil (?) -lu na-at-rat  
na-pish-tim
9. . . . -ri(?) zu-lu-la dan-na zu-ul-lil
10. [elippam sha] te-ip-pu- shu
11. . . . [bu]-lam (?) ú-ma-am ši-rim iṣ-šur sha-me-e
12. [u zēr na-ap-sha-te ka-la-ma shu-li a-na] ku-um šil(MI)-li  
(NI)
- 13 . . . . . u ki[n]-ta ru(?) . . .
- 14 . . . . . u . . . . .

## TRANSLATION.

1. . . . . 'thee(?)
2. '[the fountains of the see and oceans] I will set free,
3. '[a deluge I will make and ] it shall take away all men  
together;
4. . . . '[but thou seek life] before the deluge cometh forth
5. . . . '[For over all faithless men], as many as there are, I will  
bring overthrow, destruction, annihilation.
6. . . . . 'build a great ship and
7. . . . . 'total height (?) shall be its structure
8. . . . . 'it shall be a *magur*-boat carrying (?) what has  
been saved of life

